(iv) Provision for Mahila Sabha meetings, comprising all the adult women of a Ward/Gram Panchayat area, to deliberate upon, and decide the modalities of, expressing their views in the Gram/ Ward Sabhas;

(v) Endowing the Gram/Ward Sabha with meaningful empowerment through such measures as:

(a) Right/entitlement to all the information required for the Gram/Ward Sabhas to contribute to transparent and good governance, as well as to make the elected Panchayat truly answerable to the Gram/Ward Sabha;

(b) Approve before implementation commences, plans and programmes (including budgets) for economic development and social justice prepared by the Gram Panchayat;

(c) Authorize the issuance of utilization certificates of funds allocated for the plans, projects or programmes of the Panchayat;

(d) Identification of beneficiaries.

(vi) Such social audit measures may also be appropriately institutionalized at the Block and District level.

Task Force on Centrally Sponsored Schemes under Panchayati Raj

2262. SHRI NAND KISHORE YADAV: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have constituted a Task Force on bringing all the Centrally Sponsored Schemes under the Panchayati Raj;

(b) if so, the main recommendations made by the Task Force;

(c) whether Government have accepted all the recommendations of the Task Force;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) While the Union Government as such have not set up any Task Force under the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to bring all Centrally Sponsored Schemes under Panchayati Raj Institutions, a Task Force of officials in charge of Panchayati Raj in the States was constituted with Secretary (Panchayati Raj) Government of Karnataka as Convenor in pursuance of a decision taken in the Fifth Round Table Conference of State Ministers of Panchayati Raj held at Srinagar on 28-29 October, 2004. The objective of the Task Force was to examine the Centrally Sponsored Schemes as these are currently being implemented in the States in the context of the role these schemes provide to the PRIs in planning and implementation of these schemes in accordance with the provisions of Part-IX of the Constitution and the State Legislations on Panchayati Raj. The recommendations of the Task Force were presented to the State Ministers in charge of Panchayati Raj during the Seventh Round Table Conference held at Jaipur and were unanimously adopted by the Ministers in charge of Panchayati Raj in the States.

(b) The main recommendations of the Task Force are as under:

(i) Every State ought to undertake Activity Mapping in the manner agreed and this ought to be the necessary pre-condition to its seeking Centrally Sponsored Schemes reform. This Activity Mapping should set out not only what the three tiers ought to do, but also what the State will and will not do. It is further suggested that each Ministry of the Government of India also ought to undertake an Activity Mapping exercise that clearly sets out, in accordance with subsidiarity principle, what they need to do at their level and leave out what they need not do, which can be done at the State or Panchayat level.

(ii) Once Central Ministries undertake Activity Mapping (which can be through a consultative exercise) they are ideally placed in modifying individual scheme guidelines to be in tune with their Activity Mapping and those of the States.

(iii) Departments ought to broadly accept a threshold of allocation, below which a scheme need not exist. Initiatives of Central

Departments in simplifying and rationalising the scheme will improve the process of plan formation, implementation and monitoring.

(iv) All parallel bodies created by, or through the scheme conditionalities of CSSs ought to be wound up.

(v) Safeguards may be put in place to ensure that money does reach the Panchayats promptly and is not delayed or diverted.

(vi) For putting in place baseline standard accounting and auditing, the directions made during the Sixth Round Table at Guwahati be pursued withing a specific time frame.

(vii) One pre-condition for the reform of CSSs should be that the Centre insist on a legal and administrative framework for holding Panchayats to account for transparency and for full and voluntary disclosure of information.

(viii) A good monitoring system should be in place for making evaluation a part of the daily routine. For this purpose Task Force recommend advising prompt, web-based monitoring of performance of Panchayats down to the village level.

(ix) An exercise should be undertaken to explore whether there can be cross conversion amongst the "Big 18" schemes and additional Central Assistance Schemes.

(c) to (e) These recommendations have to be implemented by the State Governments and the Central Government. The Union Government will provide all assistance to the States in implementing these recommendations. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj will be initiating a process of meetings and visits to the States/UTs to review progress in implementing these recommendations by the States/UTs. These steps will continue through 2005-06 and subsequent years with sectoral conferences and visits to State/UT. In so far as implementation by the Central Government is concerned, in terms of Cabinet Secretariat directives in this regard, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is in interaction with the Central Ministries concerned and the Planning Commission to work towards ensuring the centrality of Panchayati Raj Institutions in all Centrally Sponsored Schemes impinging on the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.